

Fire On The Landscape

Even very large and devastating fires such as the East Fork Fire in 2002 tend to leave a patchy landscape due to the topography, changes in weather, and amount of fuel available to burn. These photos were taken on October 10, 2002. The light green area below the snow-covered slope on the left side of the top photo was a lightning-caused fire that burned in 1994. The East Fork Fire in 2002 sent embers into this area that burned small patches, but most of the area did not re-burn. The green areas on the right side of the photo and down in the floodplain did not burn. It is likely that there was not enough fuel on the ground or that moisture in the fuel helped to keep these areas from burning. The orange trees along the edge of the green patch are trees that were killed by charring of the tree trunks and scorching of the crowns without a fire in the crown. Fires help to maintain a diversity of forest plant species and age classes. It is likely, as evidenced by the presence of disturbance-dependent lodgepole pine and aspen, that fire occurred across the north slope of the Uinta Mountains on a regular basis prior to arrival of European settlers.



Trees killed by wildfires provide habitat for a variety of wildlife such as woodpeckers. The large floodplain of the East Fork of the Bear River provides ideal habitat for moose, beavers, and other wildlife. New shrub growth stimulated by the fire ensures plentiful forage for these animals. If you look closely, you may see a moose.



Looking southwest across the East Fork of the Bear River



Looking northwest down the drainage



Looking east toward the ridgeline that forms the eastern boundary of the drainage